

Cultural Values and Political Socialization: A Comparative Study

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Abstract

Political socialization is defined as the process by which individuals acquire their political knowledge, beliefs, values, and behaviors, which shape their participation in public life and political attitudes. While traditional approaches have focused on education, legal structures, and formal political institutions, this study specifically emphasizes the central role of cultural values in political socialization. Through the analysis of secondary data from Nepal, South Asia, and Western democracies, the study examines how family, religion, language, community practices, and historical experiences influence citizens' political awareness, democratic values, and participatory behaviors. The findings show that collectivism, hierarchy, and traditional beliefs have a strong influence on political socialization in Nepal and South Asian societies, while individual freedom, liberal values, and participatory cultures dominate in Western societies. In addition, globalization and digital media have created complex interactions between traditional and modern political values, especially among the younger generation. These scenarios present both opportunities for increased democratic participation and challenges such as the conflict between hierarchy and participatory expectations. This shows that understanding political socialization requires incorporating cultural, historical, and global perspectives.

Keywords: cultural values, political socialization, comparative study, political culture

Introduction

The study of political sociology shows that the role of cultural values in the political behavior, attitudes and decisions of individuals in any society is very important. "A value is valid within a boundary of a given culture in most of the cases", (Panta, 2024). These cultural values form the beliefs, social ideals, ethics and practical expectations of the members of the society. "Political culture is a concept propounded in the face of such inadequacies of old theories", (Pokhrel, 2074 BS, p. 281). Since political culture is closely related to social norms and customs, it determines the attitude of citizens towards the state, government and political institutions. In this context, the process of political socialization is important, which provides ample guidance for individuals to develop their political identity, awareness and participatory capacity. Family, school, community, media and political parties are known to play a central role in political socialization. "Political culture is created by the beliefs, values, and ideals of culture", (Shiwakoti, 2076 BS, p. 530).

In a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and multi-lingual society like Nepal, the interrelationship between political socialization and cultural values appears to be even more complex. Different ethnic and cultural groups have different cultural beliefs and traditions that influence political decision-making, voting behavior, and civic participation. “It constitutes an important link between the behavior of individuals and political events”, (Mahajan, 2016, p. 171). While religious and cultural values have a long-term impact on political beliefs and behavior in traditional communities in rural areas, modern education, media, and digital technology have led to the development of new political perspectives and values among educated youth in urban areas. Thus, the role of cultural values in political awareness and behavior varies across different levels of society. “The process of political socialization goes on throughout the life of the individual”, (Agarwal, 2004, p. 429). The study of political socialization not only contributes to the development of civic consciousness, but also lays the foundation for democratic values, civic participation, and political stability. In Nepal, citizen engagement in democratic practices, electoral processes, and party politics varies across cultural groups. The study of cultural values and political socialization is essential to understand such differences. It provides important theoretical and practical information for political leadership, policy-making, and social reform.

The approach of this study is comparative in nature. A comparative study provides an opportunity to compare not only different cultural groups within Nepal but also, if necessary, with South Asian or other democratic countries. It helps to clarify the impact of cultural values on political awareness, voting behavior, civic participation, and political participation of the younger generation. A comparative perspective makes the research multi-faceted and enables practical suggestions for policy reform. In addition to the interrelationship between cultural values and political socialization, this study also attempts to cover cultural transformation and the emergence of new political values. “The diversity of human needs has given rise to various spheres of cultural existence”, (I., 2025, p. 431). Globalization, digital communication, education, and social movements are having a major impact on cultural values and political consciousness. Youth-movements such as the Gen Z Youth have exposed the conflict between traditional and modern values, which signals a new political consciousness and social change. In this context, the political socialization of the youth is particularly important to study.

This study attempts to connect the theoretical and practical aspects. The theoretical perspectives of major theoretical models on political culture and socialization such as Almond and Verva, Easton and Dennis, Inglehart, etc. are considered as the basis. In addition, the practical study will also analyze the impact of voting behavior, citizen participation, social networks and political campaigns. This enriches the study of democratic practice and civic consciousness in the multicultural society of Nepal. Ultimately, the goal of this research is to understand the interrelationship between cultural values, political socialization, and civic participation, to conduct comparative analysis across different sociocultural contexts, and to identify measures for democratic reform. It is expected to contribute to the sustainability of political consciousness, civic participation, and democratic values in a multicultural and multireligious society like Nepal. In addition, it lays an important foundation for understanding the interrelationship between cultural and

political structures from the disciplinary perspectives of social sciences and political sciences.

Research Questions, Objectives and Originality of the Study

This study is guided by a set of interrelated research questions that seek to clarify the role of cultural values in shaping political socialization across different sociopolitical contexts. The central research questions are:

- (i) How do cultural values such as collectivism, hierarchy, religion, and community norms influence political socialization in Nepal?
- (ii) In what ways do these patterns differ from those observed in other South Asian societies and Western democracies?
- (iii) How are processes of globalization, digital media, and generational change transforming traditional modes of political socialization, particularly among youth? And
- (iv) What implications do these dynamics have for democratic participation, civic consciousness, and political stability in multicultural societies?

Based on these questions, the study pursues several specific objectives. First, it aims to analyze the cultural foundations of political socialization in Nepal by examining the influence of family, religion, language, and community practices. Second, it seeks to conduct a comparative assessment of political socialization patterns across Nepal, South Asia, and selected Western democracies in order to identify convergences and divergences in political values and participatory behavior. Third, the study examines the impact of globalization and digital communication on the transformation of political values, with particular attention to youth political engagement. Finally, it aims to generate theoretically informed and policy-relevant insights that contribute to strengthening democratic participation and inclusive governance in culturally diverse societies.

The originality of this study lies in its integrative and comparative approach. Unlike existing studies that often treat political socialization through institutional, educational, or behavioral lenses in isolation, this research foregrounds cultural values as the central analytical variable. By combining classical theories of political culture and socialization with contemporary dynamics such as digitalization and generational change, the study bridges a significant gap in the literature. Moreover, its explicit comparative focus situates Nepal's experience within broader South Asian and global democratic contexts, offering a nuanced understanding of how culture mediates political socialization in both traditional and modernizing societies. In doing so, the study makes an original contribution to political sociology and comparative political theory by linking cultural continuity and transformation to democratic practice and civic engagement.

Methodology

This study is explicitly framed as a conceptual, descriptive, and comparative analysis based entirely on secondary data. Rather than generating primary empirical data, the research aims to synthesize existing empirical findings and theoretical insights to understand how cultural values shape political socialization across different sociopolitical

contexts. The methodological emphasis is therefore on interpretation, comparison, and theoretical integration rather than causal measurement or hypothesis testing.

The selection of secondary sources followed clear and systematic criteria. Sources were included only if they were academically credible, publicly accessible, and directly relevant to the core themes of political culture, political socialization, civic participation, voting behavior, youth political awareness, and cultural values. These sources include national election and democracy surveys, census and governance statistics, policy documents, reports from recognized research institutions and international organizations, and peer-reviewed journal articles. Preference was given to studies with transparent methodological designs, comparative scope, and empirical relevance to Nepal, South Asia, or established democratic contexts, ensuring both reliability and analytical relevance.

The temporal scope of the study primarily covers literature and data produced from the early 2000s to the mid-2020s, a period marked by significant democratic transitions, globalization, digital expansion, and generational change. In the Nepalese context, particular attention is given to the post-2006 democratic period, which represents a critical phase of political restructuring, constitutional transformation, and evolving civic participation. Earlier classical works on political culture and socialization are also incorporated where necessary to provide theoretical grounding and historical continuity.

The analytical framework for comparison is informed by classical and contemporary theories of political culture and political socialization, particularly those advanced by Almond and Verba, Easton and Dennis, and Inglehart. Cultural values are analytically categorized along key dimensions such as collectivism versus individualism, hierarchy versus egalitarianism, and traditional versus modern value orientations. Political socialization outcomes are examined through indicators such as political awareness, civic engagement, electoral participation, institutional trust, and youth political behavior. Comparison is conducted using a most-different systems design, enabling the assessment of how similar political socialization outcomes may emerge under differing cultural and institutional conditions.

Overall, the descriptive and comparative use of secondary data allows the study to identify broad patterns, tendencies, and transformations in political socialization without making direct causal claims. By integrating cultural, historical, and comparative perspectives, the methodological approach provides a theoretically grounded and contextually sensitive understanding of political socialization in Nepal and beyond, while remaining transparent about its conceptual and descriptive scope.

Literature Review

To understand the relationship between cultural values and political socialization, the existing literature has linked different dimensions of political science, sociology, anthropology, and psychology. Many authors have emphasized that not only do the cultural values prevalent in a society shape individual and collective consciousness, but those values are also decisive in the structure of political culture, the continuity of political behavior, and the legitimacy of political institutions. “True individuals were socialized into their culture, but they also produced and reproduced it”, (Chilton, 1988, p. 419). Gabriel Almond and

Sydney Verba's *The Civic Culture* (1963) have presented the relationship between political socialization and cultural values in a very clear and effective way. They have analyzed the political views, participation, and beliefs of citizens in society by directly linking them to their cultural background. From this perspective, values learned in society from childhood through family, school, religion, ethnicity, media, and peer groups form political perceptions. This process is called political socialization and can make a person loyal, critical, or even indifferent to the state.

The literature also shows that political socialization varies because different societies have different cultural values. For example, in Western liberal democratic societies, the values of individualism, freedom, and equality are emphasized from early education, which helps to make citizens active participants. However, in Asian or collectivist cultures, the role of family, group, and traditional structures shape political consciousness in different ways. Works such as Ronald Engelhart's *Culture Shift* (1990) and *Modernization and Post-modernization* (1997) have clarified the relationship between modernity, economic development, and value changes. Engelhardt particularly advanced the concept of 'materialist' and 'postmaterialist' values, which show that people's political preferences differ depending on their economic situation. "Political socialization, the process by which citizenship orientations are transmitted, is conditioned by shifts in the political, social, and economic contexts at the community, nation state, and international levels", (Owen, 2008). This approach has highlighted the dynamics of cultural values and their long-term impact on political socialization.

The family is considered the first and foremost institution in the literature on political socialization. Children learn political views, party affiliations, religious beliefs, and social behavior from their parents more effectively than from any other institution. This has been made clear in their study by David Easton and Jack Dennis (1969), according to which political beliefs and loyalties develop in childhood and remain stable even in adulthood. However, the literature has also shown that over time, the media, peer groups, and higher education also have a decisive influence on political socialization. Especially with the development of information technology and the expansion of social networks, the new generation is learning political values through digital platforms rather than traditional institutions. This has further complicated the relationship between cultural values and political socialization. "A reliable way to understand a culture is by examining the expressions people use in everyday conversation", (Pavliuk, 2014, p. 119).

Various scholars have analyzed cultural values not only in terms of traditional views or religious beliefs, but also in terms of modern economic, social, and political structures. "Nepal is a multi-cultural, multi-religious and multi-linguistic country", (Bhandari, 2023, p. 106). For example, Samuel Huntington's *Political Order in Changing Societies* (1968) argues that cultural values and political socialization play a significant role in the development of political institutions. He argues that the influence of cultural values increases instability until political institutions are stable. In this way, values and socialization play an important role not only in individual stability but also in institutional stability and political stability. Huntington argues that a state of balance is necessary in the

process of political socialization, highlighting the conflict between traditional values and modern political institutions.

The role of comparative studies is also considered important in the literature. Comparing the experiences of different countries shows that despite the same cultural values, different political contexts and historical experiences make socialization different. For example, in Japan and South Korea, Confucian values are found to emphasize discipline, respect for authority, and collectivism, which have influenced political participation and attitudes towards the state. However, these values are found to be expressed differently in China, where the state has mixed with controlled ideology and made political socialization control-oriented. This shows that although cultural values are stable, the nature of political socialization depends on historical, economic, and political structures.

In this context, studies in Nepal and South Asian societies have identified religious beliefs, caste structure, family and community values as key bases of political socialization. In particular, in Nepal, caste divisions, regional inequalities and patriarchal values have had a profound impact on political consciousness. Various studies have shown that despite the expansion of awareness of democratic values, equality and rights among the new generation after the people's war, people's movement and democratic transition, the deep influence of traditional values still persists. This perspective highlights the need to understand cultural values and political socialization not only as traditional practices but also in relation to political transition and social changes.

Overall, the available literature clearly shows that cultural values and political socialization are deeply intertwined. The relationship between the two cannot be considered static and uniform, but rather changes over time, society, and technology. "The emergence of digital performance and immersive theater has greatly enhanced theater's capacity to mirror societal changes", (Gulkhara & Farzaliyeva, 2025, p. 254). Family, school, religion, media, political parties, and social movements play a central role in the process of reproducing cultural values and transforming them into political socialization. However, this process can have both positive and negative consequences. If cultural values are open, inclusive, and democratic, political socialization makes citizens active and responsible. However, if values are based on inequality, division, or authoritarian thinking, political socialization reproduces the same structure. Thus, the theoretical and comparative evidence provided by the existing literature shows that political socialization cannot be understood without cultural values. Cultural values guide an individual's political consciousness, perceptions of institutions, and styles of participation. Therefore, comparative studies are indispensable to understand the relationship between cultural values and political socialization. This not only helps to understand the experiences of different societies, but also provides a solid basis for political stability, democratic practice, and social transformation.

Nepal-focused literature also highlights unexpected patterns in youth political socialization. Despite increased civic education and exposure to democratic discourse, many young citizens express disillusionment with electoral politics while simultaneously

engaging in protests, social media activism, and issue-based movements. This duality reflects a contradiction between democratic consciousness and democratic practice. Cultural values emphasizing respect for authority coexist uneasily with growing demands for accountability and transparency, producing hybrid political orientations rather than clear ideological alignments.

Overall, the literature demonstrates that political socialization is neither culturally deterministic nor institutionally neutral. Cultural values shape political consciousness, but their effects are mediated by historical experience, institutional performance, and socioeconomic change. In Nepal, political socialization reflects a complex interaction between traditional hierarchies and modern democratic aspirations, resulting in fragmented participation, selective trust, and generational divergence. Existing studies tend to examine these dynamics in isolation—either focusing on cultural continuity or political transformation—thereby leaving a gap for an integrative, comparative analysis. This study addresses that gap by systematically examining how cultural values both sustain and destabilize political socialization in Nepal within a broader comparative framework.

Results and Discussion

The results presented in this section are structured on the basis of analysis of secondary sources, theoretical concepts and comparative perspectives. This study has deeply analyzed the relationship between cultural values and political socialization, especially in Western liberal democracies, South Asian cultural and political structures, and transitional democracies like Nepal. The findings clearly show that political socialization is not just an institutional or structural process but a process deeply influenced by values.

Results

Studies such as Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba's (1963) *Civic Culture*, Ronald Inglehart's (1990, 1997) *Culture Shift and Modernization and Post-Modernization*, and Huntington's (1968) *Political Order in Changing Societies* are fundamental to understanding the relationship between political socialization and cultural values. These studies make it clear that values are not static, but also change in form due to time, society, technology, and generational differences. The analysis of this research has shown the comparative influence of different cultural values, where Western societies appear to be more participatory and based on democratic values, while South Asian societies are still guided by traditional, collectivist, and religious values. In a country like Nepal, both types of values are found, which further complicates political socialization. “A dominant political culture may emanate from political or social leaders and need not necessarily be of the majority, whereas both dominant and secondary political cultures may either be supportive or potentially destructive of stabilizing the political system”, (Sharma, 2020, p. 66).

Cultural Value as Determinants of Political Socialization

This study has shown that cultural institutions such as family, religion, education, media, and peer groups are the most important influential factors in political socialization. The family shapes political beliefs, party affiliation, and views on authority in children from

childhood. Religion shapes certain perceptions of moral values, beliefs, and political legitimacy. The education system promotes civic values, equality, and democratic practices. In Nepal, especially, family and religion are still at the center of political socialization. This seems to be pushing the transformation of cultural values in a new direction. “A deeper understanding of a culture is achieved when one explores the historical antecedents of the beliefs and values of the people comprising the culture”, (Rarick, 2007).

When studying political socialization, cultural values should be understood as a fundamental determinant because a person's political thinking, consciousness, and behavior are not innately formed, but rather are structured by the cultural environment in which they live. Cultural values such as family, religion, education, language, tradition, and community practices

not only shape a person's social life, but also develop a perspective that connects them to the state, rights, duties, and participation. Considering the family as the first school of political socialization, the beliefs and behaviors established in the parents or household work to instill democratic or authoritarian tendencies in the child. Similarly, since religion creates concepts of morality, justice, and legitimacy, it influences the view of state power. For a long time in Nepal, the cultural value of Hinduism, which is considered to be the 'incarnation of King Vishnu', gave legitimacy to the monarchy, but now religious interpretations based on equality, compassion, and inclusiveness have further strengthened democratic socialization. Education and media are also key expressions of cultural values, which have the potential to both spread democratic consciousness or perpetuate inequality and polarization.

Similarly, in modern times, the development of social media and the highest technology had made cultural values more effective in political socialization. The young generation has created a new political consciousness in the process of expressing their thoughts, dissatisfaction and movements through Facebook, X, TikTok, Discord, Instagram. However, such media can also spread polarization, rumors and extremist values, which can make socialization unhealthy. “Social media has become a global phenomenon driven by rapid expansions in Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat, and TikTok”, (De et al., 2025, p. 1). Social groups or ethnic communities also build political identities based on their cultural values, which sometimes strengthen equality and participation and sometimes create division and conflict. In this way, cultural values are not only the background of political socialization, but also its active builder. Political socialization cannot be healthy and sustainable unless democratic values, inclusiveness and equality are permanently transformed into cultural practices. Therefore, democratic reinterpretation of cultural values is essential for political stability and a just society. In Nepal, in particular, family and religion are still the focal points of political socialization, but among the latest generation (Gen Z), social media and digital media have become the primary sources. This has led to the transformation of cultural values in a new direction.

Table 1

Cultural Institutions and their Role in Political Socialization

| Institutions | Influence on Values | Impact Socialization | Observation |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| Family | Traditions, norms and loyalty | Early-orientation towards the authority and politics | Stronger in the South Asia than West |
| Religion | Moral codes and the belief system | Legitimacy of the authority and ethical orientation | Higher impact in Nepal and India |
| Education | Civic Values, critical thinking | Promotes democratic values and the participation | Western education is more liberal |
| Media | Symbols, information | Public opinion and shapes awareness | Social-media dominant among Gen Z |
| Community | Collective norms | Reinforce identity and activism | Strong in collectivist cultures |

Note: Author’s development.

Comparative Dimensions of Cultural Values and Socialization

Comparative analysis shows that cultural values are fundamental determinants of political socialization but produce different outcomes in different contexts. In Western liberal societies, individualism, freedom, and equality are emphasized, which make citizens active participants. In South Asian societies, collectivism, religious beliefs, and social hierarchy guide political consciousness. In the case of Nepal, a mixture of both values is found. While traditional values still dominate in rural areas, modern and liberal values are gaining strength in urban areas. This has made political socialization uneven and mixed.

Looking at the comparative dimension between cultural values and political socialization, it has been found to have different effects in different countries and societies. For example, in Western liberal democracies, cultural values such as individualism, freedom, and tolerance are prominent, which develop the ability of citizens to make independent decisions, participate in debates, and challenge the state. In contrast, in Eastern or traditional societies, collectivism, discipline, and obedience to authority are given high priority, which integrate citizens into the community but prioritize consensus and accommodation over critical awareness. In a multi-religious and multilingual society like Nepal, the mixture of these two dimensions is clearly visible, on the one hand, traditional ethnic and religious values emphasize collective identity, while on the other hand, the new generation is inclined towards individualism and free expression. This makes political socialization multi-layered. While the younger generation assimilates liberal values obtained through social networks, in rural areas, traditional values are still found to be building political awareness.

In comparison, in Japan, collectivist values have strengthened social discipline and political stability, while in the United States and Western Europe, individualistic values have made citizens active participants and aware of their rights. Similarly, in South Asian countries, the complexity of cultural values, ethnic, religious, and linguistic pluralism have made political socialization uneven but dynamic, sometimes bringing inclusion through movement and sometimes causing instability through division. In this comparative

perspective, although cultural values are the basis for building common structures of political socialization, the nature, strength, and historical background of those values have given rise to different political consciousness and practices in different countries, the study of which helps to learn context-specific policy lessons for political stability, citizen participation, and democratic development.

Political Culture’s Typologies and Findings

Typology or classification has a very important place in the study of political culture, which provides a basis for analyzing the nature of political awareness, participation, and belief of citizens in different societies. The famous political culture typology presented by Gabriel Almond and Sydney Verba has classified them as parochial culture (where citizens are mostly ignorant and apathetic about the political system), subject culture (where citizens are obedient to the state and rulers but active participation is limited), and participant culture (where citizens are actively involved in politics, debate, and decision-making). All three cultures often exist in a mixed form in society, which is understood as civic culture. “As the interest in politics and culture has grown, certain substantive areas have dominated the field”, (Berezin et al., 2022, p. 103). Research shows that in Western liberal democracies, participatory or civic culture is dominant, which increases stability and democratic participation, while in societies with traditional or authoritarian political systems, parochial or subject culture still seems to dominate.

In a transitional democracy like Nepal, all these features are partially visible, where traditional values and parochial culture are still strong in rural areas, while participatory political culture is expanding in urban areas. The political activism and use of social media, especially among the new generation or "Gen Z", indicate the emergence of participatory culture, but at the same time, political instability, distrust and party disillusionment show that the subject or parochial tendency is still alive. Therefore, even if typologies only provide a basis for understanding society, the conclusions show that the political culture of any country is not stable or uniform, but is constantly changing according to historical context, economic conditions, level of education and cultural values.

Table 2

Typology of Political Culture and Socialization Outcomes

| Types | Characteristics | Socialization Impact | Example Countries |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|---|------------------------------|
| Parochial Culture | Limited awareness of politics | Low of the political participation | Traditional/tribal societies |
| Subject Culture | Awareness but passive loyalty | Compliance with the authority | China, pre-reform of Nepal |
| Participant Culture | Active engagement | High participation and the critical citizenship | USA, UK |
| Mixed Culture | Combination of all | Balanced and stable democracy | India (urban), Japan |

Note: Author’s development.

Role of Globalization and Media in Changing Political Socialization

“Globalization is a powerful real aspect of the new world system, and it represents one of the most influential forces in determining the future course of the planet”, (Onimisi, 2014, p. 113). Globalization has brought about a radical change in political socialization because it has brought together different cultures, ideologies, and value systems on a global scale. Traditionally, political socialization was based on family, school, religion, and community, but after globalization, people have started to build political awareness through global communication, international organizations, multinational companies, and transnational networks. Especially the younger generation, who have been more influenced by new technologies, educational opportunities, and labor migration, have started to interpret their political values and ideas not only in local or national contexts but also in international contexts. “Modernization and urbanization in Nepal have brought about significant change across various levels of Nepali society, both over time and across different regions”, (Silwal, 2024, p. 124). For example, universal agendas such as human rights, gender equality, climate justice, or democratic values have become an integral part of political socialization in developing societies, including Nepal. This process offers the opportunity to make citizens more aware, rights-oriented, and participatory, but it also creates conflicts with traditional cultural values, which sometimes leads to political instability or disagreement.

Similarly, media, especially digital media and social media, have become a decisive factor in political socialization. In the past, radio, television or newspapers served as the main source of political information, but now Facebook, X, TikTok, YouTube, Instagram, Discord, etc. have played a role in making political ideas, debates and movements faster and more widespread. In recent events such as the civil movement or Gen Z movement seen in Nepal, the use of social media has made the new generation actively involved, which has challenged the influence of traditional political parties. “This new generation, raised under the influence of social media, digital technology, and global values, is expressing its dissatisfaction with the traditional parties through both street protests and digital movements”, (Magar, 2025, p. 257). While the media has worked as a means of increasing transparency, accountability and public awareness on the one hand, on the other hand, it has also increased the risk of spreading fake news, rumors, hate speech and digital polarization. Therefore, both globalization and media have brought political socialization out of the traditional framework and made it more dynamic, global and challenging.

Challenges and Contradictions in Cultural Values and Political Socialization

Understanding the relationship between cultural values and political socialization presents not only opportunities but also challenges and contradictions. “Variability and hybridization of political ideologies and institutions transform value normative foundations of political socialization in contemporary societies. Changes in political communicative processes dissolve spatial-temporal boundaries of national communities and destroy the intergenerational continuity of identity”, (Zavershinskiy & Koryushkin, 2022, p. 36). While traditional values often contribute to stability, social cohesion, and a shared identity, they can also sometimes serve as a means of legitimizing inequality, exclusion, and

authoritarian behavior, as values based on racial or gender inequality undermine democratic socialization.

In a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society like Nepal, the contradictions in the political socialization process are further complicated, because within the same society, some groups are oriented towards modern, liberal and participatory values, while others are still tied to traditional obedience, feudalism or collectivism. This makes it difficult to integrate democratic practices and creates unequal political consciousness among citizens. In addition, although globalization and social media have increased awareness of democratic values and rights among the new generation, these same media have increased the risk of spreading extremism, divisive tendencies and disinformation, which can lead to political socialization becoming unhealthy rather than healthy. “Many social and media institutions play a role in socialization alongside the family. The influence of new media has grown, becoming more evident in both its positive and negative impacts”, (Saleh, 2024, p. 69). As a result, this contradiction between political culture and socialization gives rise to inequality in citizen participation, distrust of the state and social polarization, which challenge long-term political stability and democratic institutional development. Therefore, these contradictions seem difficult to resolve unless a framework of political socialization based on equality, inclusion and critical awareness is developed by reinterpreting cultural values.

Table 3
Cultural Values and Political Socialization

| Challenges/Contradictions | Possible Solutions/Remedies |
|---|---|
| Cultural values rooted in caste, gender and religious inequalities reinforce exclusion | Inclusive policies, legal frameworks ensuring equal rights and awareness-raising programs |
| Conflict between traditional values, and modern democratic values creates uneven political consciousness | Reinterpreting cultural practices through democratic principles via education, and policy initiatives |
| Persistence of parochial or subject culture in rural areas vs. participant culture in urban areas | Expanding participatory political culture through education, communication and local leadership in rural regions |
| Spread of extremist ideas, misinformation and hate speech through social media | Promoting digital literacy, fact checking mechanisms and responsible communication practices |
| Declining citizen participation due to distrust in the state, and disillusionment with parties | Strengthening transparency, accountability and institutional reforms |
| Diversity of cultural values in multicultural societies makes building a common political outlook difficult | Encouraging intercultural dialogue, developing shared national values and fostering tolerance-based civic education |

Note: Author’s development.

Discussion

Comparative Findings: Nepal, South Asia and the West

Looking at Nepal's political culture and socialization, a mix of traditional and modern values is clearly visible. In rural areas, ethnic, religious, and community values are still dominant, which skew political consciousness towards a parochial or subject type, while in urban areas, a participatory culture is expanding. In particular, the younger generation, migration, and the influence of social networks are strengthening awareness of democratic values, equality, and rights. "The independent and unorganized political activism of the young generation, born in the digital age, technology-friendly, familiar with global political consciousness, has further reinterpreted traditional political behavior, values, and citizen-state relations in a challenging way", (Magar, 2025, p. 105). However, due to party disillusionment, political instability, and distrust of leadership, many citizens have not yet been able to enter a fully participatory culture. In the South Asian context, in comparison, Nepal is a transitional democracy like India, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka, where traditional collective values, religious influences, and ethnic diversity have further complicated political socialization. While party competition and ethnic politics are strong in India, citizen participation in democratic practices is widespread, in Bangladesh, the shadow of an authoritarian culture is still strong. Nepal lies in between these two, where democratic practices are slowing down but traditional values are still strong.

There are clear differences between Nepal and South Asian political cultures when compared to Western societies. In Western liberal democracies, such as the US, UK and other Scandinavian countries, individualism, liberty, civil rights and participatory cultures have a deep influence, which has strengthened accountability to the state, transparency and citizen participation. "That democracy is not perfect has never been a secret", (Habets, 2015, pp. 145-154). The role of schools, media and civic education programs in the political socialization process there is strong, which makes people aware of civil rights and duties. However, political socialization in Nepal and South Asia is still more dependent on family, religion, ethnic community and party structures, which prioritize obedience and collectivism over critical awareness.

Therefore, the comparative findings show that Nepal and South Asian societies have not been able to completely free themselves from the influence of traditional values in political socialization, but globalization, communication technology and the emergence of the younger generation show signs of gradually shifting towards Western participatory cultures. Thus, Nepal needs to reinterpret its cultural values, learn from the common challenges of South Asia, and draw inspiration from Western participatory practices to sustain democratic social order. "The central feature of the transition that youth worldwide are undergoing today is that it results in transformations in identity, i.e., in how people think about themselves in relation to the social environment", (Arnett, 2005).

Implications of Findings in Political Theory

The findings of this comparative study have had a profound impact on political theory, primarily in redefining the relationship between identity and political behavior.

Traditional political theories, especially liberal universalist ones, assume that individuals make rational political choices based on their interests, rights, and institutional structures. “The cultural dilemmas, differences and demands the South Asian youth are confronted with when exposed to competing cultural value systems of the East (i.e. heritage country) and the West (i.e. host country) become relevant to explore”, (Zaidi et al., 2016, p. 232). However, studies of Nepal, South Asia, and Western societies show that cultural values such as collectivism, religious orientation, family hierarchy, and community loyalty are deeply embedded in the political socialization process, which challenge citizens’ perceptions of legitimacy, rights, and participation. This challenges the view of “rational choice” because political action cannot be separated from the moral, spiritual, and historical values of society. In this sense, cultural values have become central to political theory, rather than peripheral, which highlights the need to interpret democracy, governance, and legitimacy through diverse means. Thus, this study provides a basis for bridging the gap between standard political philosophy, which often emphasizes universal rights, and empirical political sociology, which emphasizes context-specific identity and power relations.

Furthermore, these findings highlight the need to understand political culture in a dynamic way, taking into account the impact of globalization and media. Traditional values such as hierarchy, collectivism, and religious practices still dominate in South Asian societies, but these values are increasingly intertwined with global democratic norms, the discourse of individual rights, and digital activism, which are developing an active political culture. Political theory, therefore, needs to embrace more fluid and evolving structures, rather than rigid typologies of “political culture” such as the parochial, the subject, and the participatory, as proposed by Almond and Verba. In such hybridity, the coexistence of traditional customary rights and modern democratic accountability, or the coexistence of aspirations for community loyalty and global citizenship, creates profound contradictions. For political theory, such contradictions demonstrate that political culture is neither entirely determined by tradition nor entirely transformed by modernity, but rather a contested space of coexistence, conflict, and adaptation of value systems. This study thus demonstrates that political theory needs to incorporate cultural relativity, historical specificity, and global interrelationships into its conceptual framework, which will further enrich the explanatory and normative capacity to understand the contemporary political world.

Synthesis

This synthesis brings together a variety of theoretical perspectives, empirical data, and comparative analysis to shed new light on the relationship between cultural values and political socialization. The traditional view of political socialization, which generally limits political socialization to the influence of formal education, legal structures, and political institutions, tends to ignore deeply rooted cultural values and traditional behaviors in society. However, this research shows that family, religion, ethnic identity, language, community cohesion, and historical experience are key determinants of political socialization. These values help citizens develop long-term perceptions of political beliefs, legitimacy, rights, and responsibilities. Similarly, collectivism and traditional hierarchies are still strongly prevalent in South Asian societies, while individual rights, liberal values,

and democratic participation have become dominant in Western societies. The synthesis of these facts shows that cultural socialization is variable and multidimensional according to cultural diversity and historical context.

Its interpretive aspect further clarifies that to understand the relationship between political theory and practice, political socialization needs to be understood not only from an “institutional” perspective, but also from a “cultural” perspective. In countries like Nepal, where a multi-ethnic, multilingual, and multi-religious structure exists, cultural values have shaped attitudes toward democracy in contradictory ways. On the one hand, traditional values strengthen political stability, community cohesion, and shared responsibility, while on the other hand, these same values can also perpetuate inequality, hierarchy, and exclusion. The impact of globalization and media has created a kind of conflict and hybridity between traditional values and modern political consciousness, which has further complicated the socialization of the new generation. Therefore, this comprehensive analysis of political culture and socialization shows that in order to strengthen political stability, democratic participation, and social justice, a balance needs to be struck by accepting cultural diversity at the policy level.

Policy Implications, Civic Reform and Future Research Directions

The findings of this study carry important implications for public policy, particularly in multicultural and transitional democracies such as Nepal. Policymakers must recognize that political participation and democratic engagement are deeply shaped by cultural values rather than solely by institutional design. Democratic reforms that overlook entrenched hierarchies related to caste, ethnicity, gender, and regional identity risk reinforcing political exclusion. Therefore, inclusive governance frameworks should integrate culturally sensitive approaches that address social inequalities while promoting democratic norms such as accountability, participation, and trust in public institutions. Strengthening local governance mechanisms and participatory platforms can help bridge the gap between traditional authority structures and democratic expectations.

From an educational and civic reform perspective, the study highlights the need to rethink civic education beyond formal curricula. While constitutional knowledge and electoral procedures remain essential, civic education in Nepal should incorporate critical engagement with cultural values, social diversity, and democratic ethics. Educational institutions, community organizations, and media platforms can play a transformative role by fostering deliberative skills, political tolerance, and issue-based participation, especially among youth. Digital literacy and responsible political communication should also be emphasized, given the growing influence of social media in shaping political attitudes and mobilization. Such reforms can help reconcile respect for cultural traditions with democratic participation and civic responsibility.

In terms of future research, the study underscores the need for systematic empirical investigations that move beyond descriptive accounts. Longitudinal and mixed-methods research designs could examine how political socialization evolves across generations and life stages, particularly in post-conflict and post-transition societies like Nepal. Micro-level studies focusing on marginalized communities, youth, and migrant populations would

provide deeper insights into how cultural values interact with political institutions in everyday contexts. Comparative empirical research across South Asian and global settings would further enhance understanding of how similar cultural traditions produce divergent political outcomes under different institutional and historical conditions.

Conclusion

This research has shown that political socialization is not simply the result of institutional structures or legal mechanisms, but is a process that is directly linked to cultural values, traditions, and historical experiences deeply embedded in society. Family, religion, ethnicity, language, community relations, and social life form the basis for the formation of political attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. Comparatively, collectivism, hierarchy, and religious beliefs have shaped political socialization in Nepal and South Asian countries, while individual freedom, liberal values, and democratic participation have taken a prominent place in Western societies. This shows that political socialization is not a universal, uniform, and static process, but rather is variable, multidimensional, and dynamic according to social, cultural, and historical contexts. This study also highlights the need to rethink typologies of political culture from a theoretical perspective because a new political culture is developing in contemporary societies as a hybrid of tradition and modernity.

Another important aspect of the conclusion is that globalization and the rapid expansion and influence of media have taken political socialization to a new dimension. The interaction between traditional values and modern democratic ideals is creating a complex and multi-dimensional form of political consciousness in the new generation, which, on the one hand, has strengthened the demand for democratic participation, rights and transparency, while on the other hand, it has also created a struggle with traditional hierarchies and cultural inequalities. This situation shows that in order to sustain political stability and democratic practice, a strategy is necessary to accept cultural diversity, positively promote the digital socialization of the young generation, and maintain a balance of modern values with traditional values. Thus, the conclusion of this research has given a message for both political theory and practice that when understanding political socialization, cultural values should be considered as a central variable, not a periphery, which provides a more holistic, explanatory and relevant approach to understanding contemporary world politics.

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